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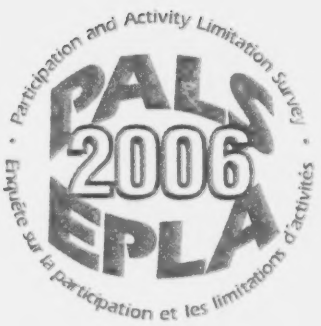
Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: A Profile of Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities



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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p}	preliminary
^{r}	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E}	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

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Introduction

The nationwide Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) is designed to collect information on adults and children with disabilities - i.e., whose everyday activities are restricted because of a health condition or other limitation. Funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada and carried out by Statistics Canada, PALS provides essential information on the prevalence of different disabilities, the types of support available to people with disabilities, their employment profile, income and participation in social activities. This information is used by all levels of government, associations, researchers and non-governmental organizations in planning the services needed by people with activity limitations to enable them to participate fully in all spheres of life.

The latest data on people with disabilities were gathered in 2006, following a previous PALS conducted in 2001. The 2006 PALS provides a measure of variability in the number of people with disabilities and, where possible, changes in their situation over the previous five years. New questions were also added to reflect technological developments and new policy and program data requirements.

This article, the third in a series of releases on PALS data, contains the survey results on specialized equipment and aids for children aged 5 to 14 and adults 15 and older with disabilities. The main themes explored are the use and requirements of such aids and equipment, funding sources, and related obstacles.

Other releases dealing with issues such as employment and income will be issued later in 2008.

The first results were published in December 2007, and examine the prevalence, type and severity of disability, by age and sex (see No. 89-628-X No.1 in the catalogue for further information).

Use of specialized equipment and aids

Specialized equipment and aids include those that allow people with disabilities to carry out their daily activities, for example by facilitating movement (wheelchairs, hand and arm supports) or helping them hear, see or communicate (aural prostheses, reading materials in Braille, communication keyboards). However, glasses and contact lenses are not included in this list, as they are commonly used vision aids and most people who wear them say their activities are not limited because of vision problems.

In order to assess the specialized-equipment requirements of people with activity limitations, the 2006 PALS asked respondents about their use of and need for specialized devices for hearing, vision, communication, mobility, agility, pain and learning disabilities, as well as all other specialized equipment or aids. These questions made it possible to distinguish between those individuals who had all the specialized support they needed, those who had some equipment but needed more, and those who did not have any specialised equipment and needed some.

As mentioned previously, the 2006 PALS targeted more than one type of disability. Due to the nature of certain types of disabilities and the structure of the questionnaire, only seven types of disabilities lent themselves to questions on the use and need of specialized equipment and aids. However, a section of the survey gave respondents the opportunity to provide information about other technical equipment and aids that had not been previously reported. Therefore, the results presented in this report refer only to the types of disabilities listed in text box 1 and not the entire PALS population.

Text box 1
Types of disability among adults and children
The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) survey questions allow the identification of the following types of disabilities, for which aids are available, among adults and children:

Hearing: Difficulty hearing what is being said in a conversation with one other person, in a conversation with three or more persons, or in a telephone conversation.

Seeing: Difficulty seeing ordinary newsprint or clearly seeing someone's face from 4 metres away (12 feet).

Communication: Difficulty speaking and / or being understood.

Mobility: Difficulty walking half a kilometre or up and down a flight of stairs, about 12 steps without resting, moving from one room to another, carrying an object of 5 kg (10 pounds) for 10 metres (30 feet) or standing for long periods.

Agility: Difficulty bending, dressing and undressing oneself, getting into or out of bed, cutting own toenails, using fingers to grasp or handling objects, reaching in any direction (for example, above one's head) or cutting own food.

Pain[*]**:** Limited in the amount or kind of activities that one can do because of a long-term pain that is constant or reoccurs from time to time (for example, recurrent back pain).

Learning: Difficulty learning because of a condition, such as attention problems, hyperactivity or dyslexia.

Other: The survey also collected information on other needs for assistive devices that were not exclusive to a specific disability type. Respondents from any disability type could report any other assistive device needs or usage in this section.

[*] Applicable only to adult respondents

Assistive aids and devices for adults

In 2006, 2.7 million Canadians 15 years and over with disabilities or nearly two-thirds of this population used or needed technical aids or specialized equipment to help them perform one or more daily activities.

Out of the entire adult population with disabilities who used assistive technology, six out of ten had all the equipment they needed (all needs were met), while three out of ten used such equipment but needed more aids (some needs met), and one out of ten had none of the equipment required (no needs met; see table 1).

Table 1
Adult population with disabilities, by the extent of met needs for specialized equipment or aids, Canada, 2006

Need	Number	%
Adults population with needs	**2,658,250**	**100.0**
No needs met	262,800	9.9
Some needs met	767,290	28.9
All needs met	1,628,160	61.3

Note: The sum of the values in the category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

The level of needs that had been met varied considerably across for the different types of disabilities. Requirements and use were not the same across all disabilities. Individuals using equipment specific to mobility, vision and pain limitations were among the most likely to report having all the equipment they needed, with seven out of ten respondents aged 15 and over reporting their needs had been met (see table 2). Although relatively small in absolute numbers, seven out of ten respondents with communication disabilities (18,800) had none of the technical equipment or aids they required.

Table 2
Adult population with disabilities, by use of need for specialized equipment or aids and type of disability, Canada, 2006

Limitation	No needs met		Some needs met		All needs met		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Hearing	183,000	26.6	97,440	14.1	408,920	59.3	689,370
Seeing	31,960	12.4	41,200	16.0	184,980	71.7	258,150
Communication	18,800	71.9	F	F	6,820 E	26.1 E	26,140
Mobility	124,810	10.5	180,160	15.2	881,830	74.3	1,186,800
Agility	114,740	27.8	38,270	9.3	259,790	62.9	412,800
Pain	125,850	12.8	171,050	17.4	688,020	69.9	984,920
Learning	46,600	27.7	26,720	15.9	94,930	56.4	168,250
Other	164,660	38.0	24,750 E	5.7 E	244,480	56.4	433,890

Note: The sum of the values in the category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Age also affected the likelihood of needs being met. People aged 65 and over were the most likely to have all the equipment they needed (68.3%). This proportion falls to about 56% for both people 40 to 64 and those aged 15 to 39 (see table 3). Accordingly, among respondents who stated they had none of the specialized equipment or aids required there was a higher prevalence in the 15 to 39 age group than those aged 65 and over (12.1% vs. 7.0%, respectively).

Table 3
Adult population with disabilities, by use of need for specialized equipment or aids and age group, Canada, 2006

Age group	No needs met		Some needs met		All needs met		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Total - 15 and older	**262,800**	**9.9**	**767,290**	**28.9**	**1,628,160**	**61.3**	**2,658,250**
15 to 39	39,040	12.1	102,670	31.9	180,010	56.0	321,720
40 to 64	141,100	12.1	375,200	32.3	645,930	55.6	1,162,240
65 and older	82,660	7.0	289,420	24.7	802,210	68.3	1,174,290

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

There were no differences for all needs being met based on gender. Despite an overrepresentation of women (about four hundred thousand more), among those respondents 15 and over needing specialized equipment or aids, the figures for men (60.8%) and women (61.6%) whose requirements had all been met were very similar (see table 4). It should be noted however that women outnumbered men by approximately four hundred thousand. There were important differences, however, among respondents whose requirements for specialized equipment had not been met at all, women represented about half the figure for men (7.5% vs. 13.0% respectively).

Table 4
Adult population with disabilities, by use of need for specialized equipment or aids and by sex, Canada, 2006

Need	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total who need	**1,139,290**	**42.9**	**1,518,960**	**57.1**	**2,658,250**	**100.0**
No needs met	148,410	13.0	114,390	7.5	262,800	9.9
Some needs met	298,590	26.2	468,700	30.9	767,290	28.9
All needs met	692,280	60.8	935,880	61.6	1,628,160	61.2

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

People with very severe disabilities were least likely to have all their needs met

The severity of a disability also revealed some important differences as the level of met needs for technical equipment decreased as severity increased. More than three quarters of people with mild disabilities had all of their needs met (75.9%) compared to less than half of people with very severe disabilities (41.3%) reporting that they had all the assistive technology they needed (see table 5). In fact, people with very severe disabilities were the only group where more people had some met needs than completely met needs (51.9% vs. 41.3%). Also, individuals with a very severe disability are less likely to have no met needs as compared to those with mild or moderate degree of disability.

Table 5
Adult population with disabilities, by use of need for specialized equipment or aids and severity of disability, Canada, 2006

Need	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Very severe		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total who need	**582,360**	**21.9**	**672,880**	**25.3**	**891,330**	**33.5**	**511,670**	**19.3**	**2,658,250**	**100.0**
No needs met	65,330	11.2	78,080	11.6	84,310	9.5	35,090	6.9	262,800	9.9
Some needs met	74,910	12.9	133,780	19.9	293,240	32.9	265,360	51.9	767,290	28.9
All needs met	442,130	75.9	461,020	68.5	513,780	57.6	211,220	41.3	1,628,160	61.3

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

There was minimal variation among the provinces in the reporting of having needs met. The only exception was residents of the Territories who trailed the national average in terms of having all of their needs met for assistive devices or aids (see table 6).

However, a distinction must be made for unmet needs. As mentioned previously, someone could still have unmet needs, whether or not he or she already used one or more technical devices because they need even more assistive devices - a distinction that likely underlies the different characteristics among people whose requirements have not been met.

Table 6
Adult population with disabilities, by use of need for specialized equipment or aids, provinces and territories, Canada, 2006

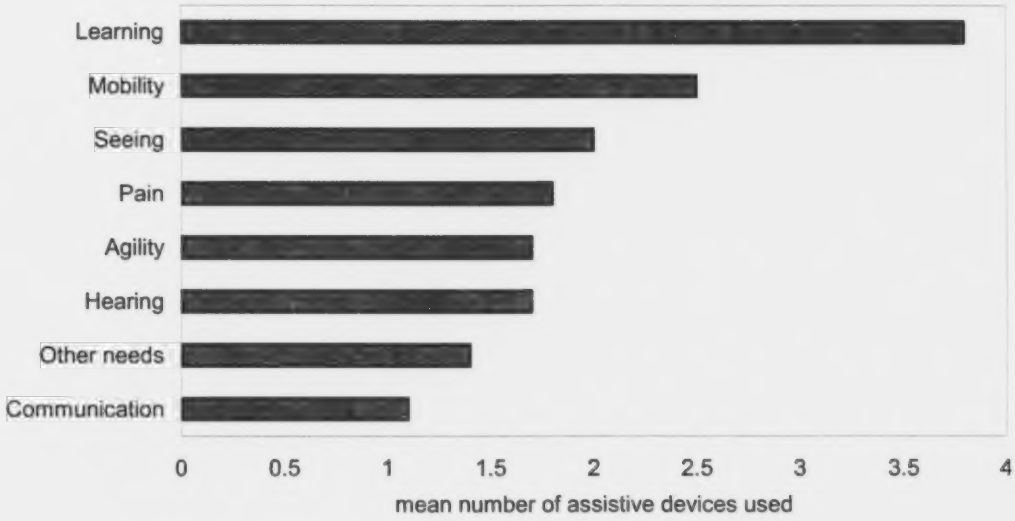
Province	No needs met		Some needs met		All needs met		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Canada	**262,800**	**100.0**	**767,290**	**100.0**	**1,628,160**	**100.0**	**2,658,250**
Newfoundland and Labrador	4,290	9.4	13,790	30.2	27,620	60.4	45,710
Prince Edward Island	880	6.9	3,450	26.9	8,480	66.2	12,810
Nova Scotia	9,800	8.7	31,320	27.8	71,350	63.4	112,470
New Brunswick	7,410	10.3	19,810	27.5	44,850	62.2	72,070
Quebec	55,310	13.0	122,560	28.8	247,380	58.2	425,250
Ontario	102,650	9.0	341,470	29.8	700,240	61.2	1,144,360
Manitoba	10,620	10.8	26,530	26.9	61,430	62.3	98,580
Saskatchewan	7,640	8.6	24,430	27.3	57,390	64.1	89,460
Alberta	25,540	9.8	72,520	27.8	162,410	62.4	260,470
British Columbia	37,900	9.7	109,700	28.0	244,070	62.3	391,670
Territories	750	13.9	1,720	31.9	2,930	54.3	5,400

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

People with learning disabilities used the most assistive devices

The average number of assistive devices used by each type of activity limitation is presented in chart 1. People with learning disabilities used far more assistive devices than any other type of disability at 3.8 different types of assistive technology per person. People with mobility limitations used on average the second highest number of assistive devices per person (2.5) followed by those with seeing (2.0). People with communication limitations used the fewest assistive devices at just 1.1 aids per person.

Chart 1
Mean number of assistive devices used by type of disability for adults, Canada, 2006



Note: Includes the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Magnifiers were the most common assistive device for people with seeing limitations

The types of assistive devices also vary dramatically by the type of disability. Some types of disability showed clear patterns where the vast majority of people used the same type of assistive device. For example, 91.3% of people with seeing limitations use magnifiers and 88.0% of people reporting pain limitations used hot or cold aids. Conversely, just 53.3% of people with communication limitations used a computer or keyboard device to communicate and 54.6% of people with agility limitations used grasping tools or reach extenders (see table 7).

Table 7
Most commonly used assistive device by type of disability for adults, Canada, 2006

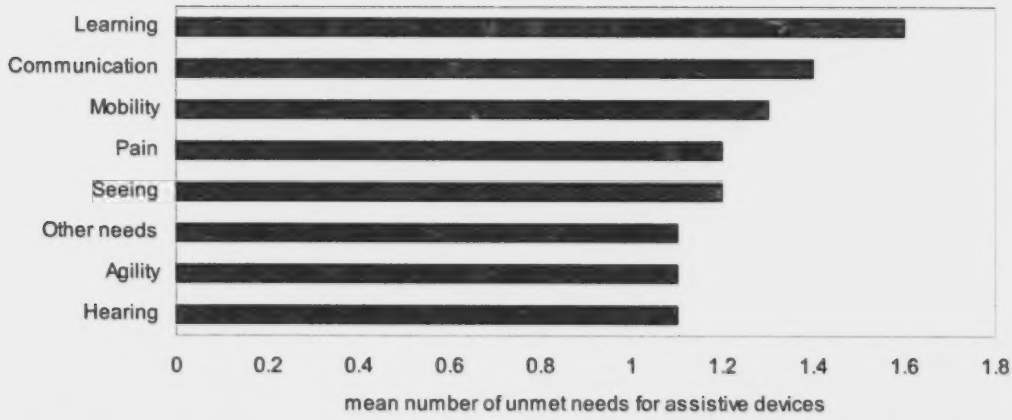
Aid type	Most common assistive device	%
Hearing	Hearing aids	79.7
Seeing	Magnifiers	91.3
Communication	Computer or keyboard devices	53.3 E
Mobility	Canes or walking sticks	71.6
Agility	Grasping tools or reach extenders	54.6
Pain	Hot or cold aids	88.0
Learning	Home computers	83.2
Other needs	Respiratory aids[1]	24.5

1. Respiratory aids include aids such as inhalers, puffers and oxygen.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

People with learning limitations have more unmet needs for assistive devices

There was little variation between the average numbers of unmet needs across the different types of disability; every type of disability needed at least one more assistive device on average. People with learning disabilities needed, on average, 1.6 assistive devices compared to 1.4 aids needed by people with communication limitations and 1.3 aids needed by people with mobility limitations (see chart 2). People with hearing or agility limitations reported very few unmet needs for assistive devices at 1.1 additional aids needed per person.

Chart 2
Mean number of unmet needs for assistive devices by type of disability for adults, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

One third of people with seeing limitations have unmet needs for large print reading materials

There was considerable variation in the unmet needs of people with disabilities between the various disability types. Only about one quarter of people with mobility (23.6%), learning (26.5%), communication (26.6%) and seeing limitations (29.7%) required the same type of assistive technology. People with hearing limitations reported the most consistent technology needs, with nearly three quarters (72.0%) reporting a need for a hearing aid. The most common assistive technology needs for each disability type are presented in table 8.

Table 8
Most common unmet need for assistive devices by type of disability for adults, Canada, 2006

Aid type	Most common assistive device	%
Hearing	Closed caption TV or decoder	72.0
Seeing	Large print reading materials	29.7
Communication	Computer or keyboard device	26.6 E
Mobility	Lifts or lift type devices	23.6
Agility	Hand or arm brace	39.4
Pain	Comfort aids[1]	29.7
Learning	Specialised telephone	26.5
Other needs	Other aids	79.4
	Bath, shower, or toilet aids	13.7

1. Comfort aids include items such as therapeutic cushions and adjustable beds.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Most people with disabilities pay for their assistive devices themselves

For people with disabilities, paying for assistive devices can be a significant additional expense, over and above the necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. The costs of assistive technology can vary dramatically from a few dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. The 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) results indicate that most people with disabilities (or their immediate family) had paid for the assistive devices themselves.

When examining who paid the most costs for each assistive device across Canada and by the province or territory of residence, the most striking result was the discrepancy between the sources of payment among the provinces. The largest difference was between Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia (see table 9). Newfoundland and Labrador residents were the least likely of all the provinces to have paid for their aids themselves (61.6%) and second to the Territories (58.6%). Conversely, a larger percentage of British Columbia (79.5%) and Ontario (71.9%) residents had paid for their assistive devices themselves. According to the survey results, the Territories (25.2%), Quebec (18.2%) and Alberta (16.5%) had the highest levels of public sector funding of assistive devices while British Columbia trailed the national average significantly (6.9%).

Table 9
Source of payment for adults' assistive technology, by provinces and territories, 2006

Province	Parent or family	Public sector [1]	Private sector [2]	Belongs to someone else	Other	Not applicable
	percentage					
Canada	**70.4**	**12.0**	**7.0**	**3.8**	**4.6**	**2.2**
Newfoundland and Labrador	61.6	15.4	9.2	4.2 [E]	5.9	3.7
Prince Edward Island	68.8	11.2	6.3	3.8	6.4	3.5
Nova Scotia	68.0	12.2	7.8	3.1	5.9	3.1
New Brunswick	64.9	11.7	11.5	4.3	5.2	2.5
Quebec	62.9	18.2	6.0	5.0	6.6	1.4 [E]
Ontario	71.9	10.4	8.3	3.3	3.9	2.2
Manitoba	69.1	12.6	5.3	5.3 [E]	4.3	3.3
Saskatchewan	68.6	14.1	5.5	5.0	3.6	3.3
Alberta	66.3	16.5	5.0	4.5	5.6	2.2 [E]
British Columbia	79.5	6.9	4.5 [E]	3.2 [E]	3.6	2.2 [E]
Territories	58.6	25.2	4.9 [E]	5.6 [E]	3.9 [E]	1.9 [E]

1. Public sector includes government programs and the health care system.
2. Private sector includes insurance companies and non-profit organizations.
Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

People with learning limitations likely to have paid for their aids

Turning to specific disability types reveals that people with learning limitations were very likely to have paid for their assistive devices themselves (85.9%). People with seeing and mobility limitations were less likely to have done so, at 58.0% and 64.2%, respectively.

Cost is the most frequently cited reason for unmet needs for assistive devices

The cost of purchasing or maintaining assistive devices was the most frequently cited reason for unmet needs, accounting for 56.1% of all unmet needs for assistive devices (see table 10). The "other" category was also a common response for unmet needs (22.3%) and primarily included responses such as not having time to get the aid or currently going through the acquisition process. Not knowing where to get the assistive device accounted for 9.2% of all unmet needs.

Table 10
Reason for unmet need in assistive devices for adults, provinces and territories, 2006

Province	Cost[1]	Not available locally	Not severe enough [2]	Don't know where to get	On waiting list	Other	No reason specified
	percentage						
Canada	**56.1**	**1.5**	**6.4**	**9.2**	**1.6** [E]	**22.3**	**2.8**
Newfoundland and Labrador	57.3	2.2 [E]	6.8 [E]	5.8 [E]	F	21.3	F
Prince Edward Island	63.3	F	7.1 [E]	6.8 [E]	F	18.4	F
Nova Scotia	61.9	1.6 [E]	4.5 [E]	5.5 [E]	1.7 [E]	21.3	3.5 [E]
New Brunswick	57.3	3.3 [E]	7.1 [E]	5.5 [E]	F	20.2	4.3 [E]
Quebec	46.9	F	6.5 [E]	9.2 [E]	4.5 [E]	29.6	2.3 [E]
Ontario	58.0	1.4 [E]	5.6 [E]	10.0	F	20.8	3.2 [E]
Manitoba	56.0	1.6 [E]	9.9 [E]	6.5 [E]	F	22.6	2.9 [E]
Saskatchewan	55.0	4.0 [E]	8.0 [E]	7.5 [E]	F	21.1	2.7 [E]
Alberta	56.9	F	7.1	7.0 [E]	F	23.4	2.2 [E]
British Columbia	58.0	F	7.5 [E]	11.1 [E]	F	19.9	F
Territories	35.3	13.4	4.0 [E]	8.9	4.2 [E]	29.5	4.7 [E]

1. Cost includes either the purchase or maintenance of the assistive device.
2. Condition not severe enough includes the opinions of respondents themselves, their doctors, and their insurance companies.
Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

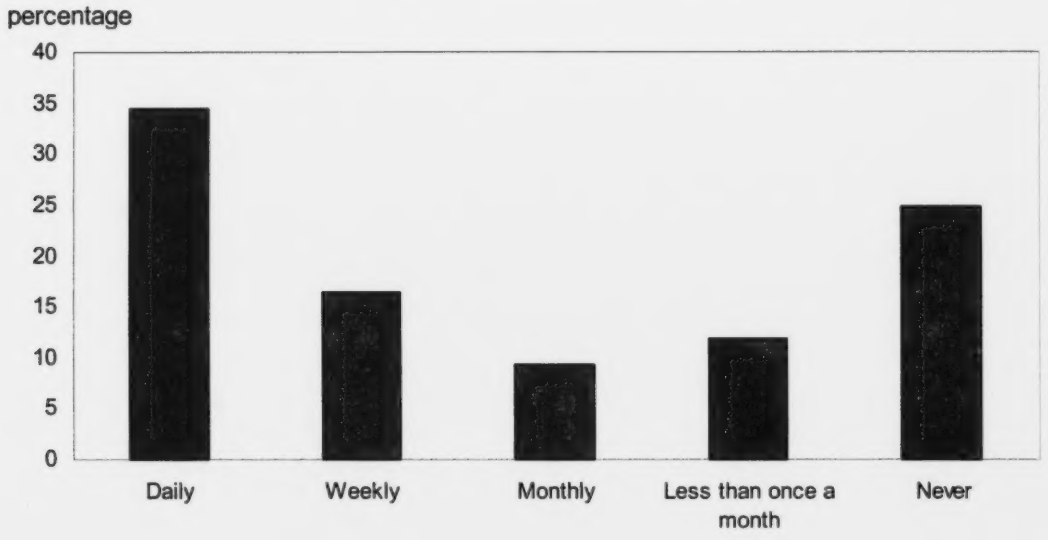
Reasons for unmet needs varied considerably by type of disability

There was considerable variation within the specific disability types in terms of the reasons for unmet needs. Cost was the most common reason ranging from a low of 38.0% for people with seeing limitations to a high of 70.3% for people with pain limitations. There was also considerable variation between the disability types for people who did not know where to get the assistive device they needed. People who reported communication, agility and learning limitations were the most likely to be unsure where to obtain their assistive devices (20.0%, 16.2%, and 14.6% respectively) while people with mobility limitations were far more likely to know where to obtain their aids with only 5.9% unsure where to obtain them.

As noted previously, the use of specialized equipment is critical because it can offset barriers to full participation in everyday activities by reducing the impact of and, in some cases, eliminating barriers and activity limitations.

The importance of specialized equipment and aids for people with disabilities is highlighted in chart 3. Even with the use of assistive technology, slightly more than half of all people with disabilities (50.8%) experienced difficulty participating in everyday activities at least once per week or more due to their activity limitation (see chart 3).

Chart 3
The proportion of adults who experience difficulty participating in everyday activities, by frequency, for all limitation types, Canada, 2006



Note: Includes Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Looking at the amount of difficulty experienced in everyday activities by the type of activity limitation also reveals some important differences. Compared to the other types of disability, adults with mobility, agility or pain limitations formed a group with much higher frequencies of difficulty (55.0%, 53.1% and 59.3% respectively), on a daily or weekly basis (see table 11).

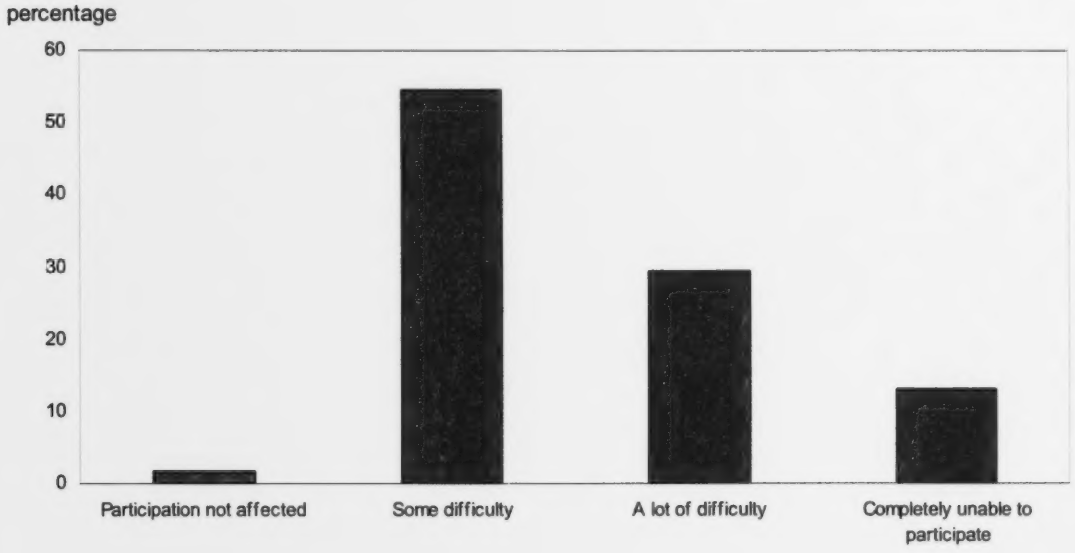
Table 11
Frequency of experiencing difficulty participating in everyday activities for adults with limitations, by limitation type, Canada, 2006

Limitation	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never
	percentage				
Hearing	23.0	11.0	6.2	9.5	47.2
Seeing	26.3	9.1	4.9 [E]	7.5	48.6
Communication	25.9	15.9	9.4	14.6	30.1
Mobility	39.5	15.5	8.8	10.4	22.7
Agility	36.3	16.8	9.0	12.0	22.2
Pain	37.2	22.1	12.7	14.6	10.6
Learning	28.5	12.6	8.9	11.4	34.8

Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Examining the frequency of difficulty only tells half the story. The other half of the story is the intensity of the difficulty. Slightly more than two out of five adults with activity limitations who experienced difficulty with everyday activities (42.4%) reported that they experienced a lot of difficulty or were completely unable to participate. Only a handful of people reported that their participation was not affected in any way (see chart 4).

Chart 4
Intensity of limitation experienced by adults with disabilities who have difficulties participating in everyday activities, for all limitation types, Canada, 2006



Note: Includes Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

The most frequent types of disability to experience a lot of difficulty or be completely prevented from participating were mobility (45.7%), pain (45.4%), learning (43.4%) and agility (42.5%). This situation indicates the importance, for people with disabilities, of having specialized equipment and aids to carry out everyday activities and fully participate in society (see table 12).

Table 12
Limitation experienced by adults with disabilities who have difficulties to participate in everyday activities, by all limitation types, Canada, 2006

Limitation	Some difficulty	A lot of difficulty	Completely unable to participate	Participation not affected
	percentage			
Hearing	67.2	21.8	6.1	3.1
Seeing	63.9	20.3	11.1	3.8 [E]
Communication	57.9	24.9	11.3	4.9 [E]
Mobility	51.6	30.8	14.9	1.3
Agility	55.1	29.9	12.6	1.5
Pain	52.2	32.0	13.4	1.1 [E]
Learning	53.8	29.0	14.6	1.8 [E]

Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

A small percentage of adults with hearing or communication limitations use sign language

For people with hearing or communication limitations, another important aid to facilitate social participation is the use of sign language. There were approximately 35,500 adults in Canada in 2006 with a hearing or a communication limitation who used sign language, representing less than 1% of all adults with disabilities in Canada, and only 2.3% of all adults with a hearing or a communication limitation. Given their small numbers, the results for provinces and territories should be used with caution. Nevertheless, Ontario had the largest population of adults using sign language (13,500 persons), with 38.1% of all sign language users in Canada residing in Ontario. Although the smallest proportion of Canadian sign language users resided in one of the three territories (0.8[E] %) they constituted 3.4% of the total population with disabilities in the territories which is higher than any other region in Canada. There also appears to be regional clusters of sign language users. For instance, British Columbia alone had nearly the same number of sign language users as in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta combined (see table 13).

Table 13
Adults with a hearing or communication limitations who use sign language by Regions, Canada, 2006

Region	Number	% of total population	% of region's population with disabilities
Canada	**35,470**	**100.0**	**0.8**
Atlantic[1]	3,730	10.5	1.0
Quebec	6,530 [E]	18.4 [E]	0.9 [E]
Ontario	13,500 [E]	38.1	0.8 [E]
Prairies[2]	5,810	16.4	0.8
British Columbia	5,610 [E]	15.8 [E]	0.9 [E]
Territories	290 [E]	0.8 [E]	3.4 [E]

1. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
2. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Almost half of sign language users use American Sign Language

There were 1,266,120 adults in Canada in 2006 who reported a hearing limitation but not necessarily a communication limitation. This group consisted of 25,370 (2.0%) people who reported using sign language. American Sign Language (ASL) users constituted nearly half of this group (49.8%) while approximately one quarter (27.1%) used another type of sign language aside from LSQ to communicate. These other types of sign language included a language specific to the geographical region of residence, body language and gestures, and some reported inventing their own form of sign language.

60% of adults with a hearing limitation experience only some hearing loss

The degree and duration of hearing loss in adults can vary dramatically so the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) collected data for people who considered themselves to be deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or experiencing some hearing loss.

The largest proportion (60.8%) of adults with a hearing limitation reported they experience some hearing loss and more than one quarter (28.2%) are hard of hearing. In absolute numbers, Ontario and Quebec were home to most deafened adults in Canada. Together, these two provinces accounted for approximately three-quarters of all deafened adults in Canada.

Among respondents with a hearing limitation, 2.0% did not believe they belonged to one of the given categories. Many of those people reported having difficulties with specific tones, having different degrees of limitation in each ear, or experience a hearing limitation due to a diagnosed health condition (see table 14).

Table 14
Degree of hearing limitation for adults, by geographical region, Canada, 2006

Region	Deaf	Deafened	Hard of hearing	Some hearing loss	Other	Total
	number					
Canada	**36,770**	**46,390**	**357,090**	**769,910**	**25,070**	**1,266,120**
Atlantic[1]	5,470	4,400	35,950	72,210	2,220 E	122,900
Quebec	6,820 E	17,910	40,760	108,470	9,900 E	195,740
Ontario	F	15,980 E	155,780	323,830	x	521,400
Prairies[2]	6,340 E	3,500 E	68,390	141,210	5,040 E	229,200
British Columbia	4,270 E	4,440 E	55,140	122,480	3,280 E	193,790
Territories	70 E	150 E	1,070	1,720	x	3,090

1. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
2. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Half of the sign language users with a hearing limitation never use a language interpreter

Nearly one half of all people with a hearing limitation in Canada in 2006 who used sign language said they never used the services of a language interpreter. Those who did use the services were split evenly among the two frequency categories, 16.7% used the services at least once per week or more and 16.3% said they use the services from at least once a month to less than once every 6 months (see table 15).

Table 15
The frequency of using a language interpreter by adults with a hearing limitation, Canada, 2006

Frequency	number	%
Total	**25,370**	**100.0**
From every day to at least once a week	4,240 [E]	16.7 [E]
From once a month to less than once in 6 months	4,140 [E]	16.3 [E]
Never	12,220	48.2
Not applicable	F	F

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Children and assistive aids and devices

The latter half of this report focuses exclusively on children aged 5 to 14 who have an activity limitation and use assistive aids and devices. It should be noted that children's use and need for assistive devices specifically to help with their education is covered in a separate report titled 'Profile of Education for Children with Disabilities in Canada' to be released in May 2008.

In 2006, 90,480 children aged 5 to 14 used or needed assistive technology to help them participate in their daily activities, representing slightly more than half (51.8%) of all children with disabilities in that age group in Canada.

Slightly less than half of all children's needs for assistive technology were met completely

Considering all of the needs for assistive technology reported by children needing or using this technology, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2006 found that slightly less than half of all children's needs for assistive technology were met completely (45.3%), one quarter had none of the assistive technology they needed, (24.6%) and the remaining third had some of the equipment they required but needed more (30.1%; see table 16).

Table 16
Use and need for assistive technology for children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, in Canada, 2006

Need	number	%
Child population with needs	**90,480**	**100.0**
No needs met	22,240	24.6
Some needs met	27,230	30.1
All needs met	41,020	45.3

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Overall, the provinces were relatively similar in terms of needs for assistive technology being met but there was some variation. For example, Prince Edward Island had a rather low rate of completely met needs for any province or territory (37.6%) and also a relatively low rate of completely unmet needs (19.6%), leaving 42.8% of people in this province with some met needs. Percentages of those with completely met needs are relatively even across the country ranging from 37.5% to 53.2%. Saskatchewan (53.2%), Nova Scotia (52.3%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (52.2%) are the provinces on the higher end of this range. Manitoba (33.8%) and Quebec (30.2%) are the only two provinces where more than 30% of all disabled children have completely unmet needs while in other provinces and territories in Canada less than a quarter of children with disabilities have completely unmet needs (see table 17).

Table 17
Use and need for assistive technology for children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, by province and territories, Canada, 2006

Province	No needs met		Some needs met		All needs met		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Canada	**22,240**	**24.6**	**27,230**	**30.1**	**41,020**	**45.3**	**90,480**	**100.0**
Newfoundland and Labrador	220 E	17.7 E	370	30.2	640	52.2	1,230	1.4
Prince Edward Island	70 E	19.6 E	160 E	42.8	140 E	37.6 E	360	0.4
Nova Scotia	540	20.2	740	27.6	1,400	52.3	2,680	3.0
New Brunswick	420	25.0	510	30.1	760	44.9	1,690	1.9
Quebec	4,540	30.2	3,750	24.9	6,770	44.9	15,060	16.6
Ontario	9,600 E	23.7 E	13,370	33.0	17,570	43.3	40,530	44.8
Manitoba	1230 E	33.8	830	22.7	1,590	43.5	3,650	4.0
Saskatchewan	490 E	18.3 E	760	28.5	1,420	53.2	2,680	3.0
Alberta	2,490 E	23.6 E	2,710	25.7	5,320	50.6	10,510	11.6
British Columbia	2,570	21.7	3,950	33.5	5,290	44.8	11,820	13.1
Territories	70 E	25.4 E	80 E	30.8 E	120 E	43.8	280	0.3

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Many children with communication or seeing limitations have only partially met needs

A high proportion of children with communication limitations (51.5%) and seeing limitations (49.1%) have only partially met needs in terms of disability aids (see table 18). Previous Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) releases have noted that mobility and agility limitations are related, which is further supported by the fact that they follow a similar pattern in terms of needs. A high proportion of children with either of these two limitations had their needs fully satisfied by the aids that they used (61.7% and 76.4%) and a low proportion of them had completely unmet needs (18.0% and 17.3%). The share of children with an agility-related limitation whose needs were only partially met was very small (6.4%).

The proportions of children reporting a learning limitation are equally distributed among the three groups. Nevertheless, it should be noted that when considering the total rate of unmet need, (either some met needs or completely unmet needs), children with learning disabilities were second only to children with communication limitations in terms of having some type of unmet need (59.4% learning, 72.2% communication). This could be explained by the fact that the definition of learning limitations covers many conditions that require different types of aids. In addition, previous Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) releases have noted that learning disabilities are the fastest growing type of disability, possibly faster than the needs can be accommodated.

Table 18
Use and need for assistive technology for children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, by disability type, Canada, 2006

Limitation	No needs met		Some needs met		All needs met		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Hearing	1,940	26.4 [E]	1,800	24.5 [E]	3,620	49.1	7,370
Seeing	2,137 [E]	49.1 [E]	F	17.0 [E]	1,470	33.9 [E]	4,350
Speech	6,010	51.5	2,420 [E]	20.7 [E]	3,250 [E]	27.8 [E]	11,680
Mobility	1,970 [E]	18.0 [E]	2,220 [E]	20.3 [E]	6,730 [E]	61.7	10,910
Agility	1,600 [E]	17.3 [E]	590 [E]	6.4 [E]	7,060	76.4	9,250
Learning	17,300	31.2	15,650	28.2	22,540	40.6	55,500
Other	7,720	32.6	1,610 [E]	6.8 [E]	14,330	60.6	23,660

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Nearly half of children with partially met needs have a very severe disability

Of all children with disabilities who reported some unmet needs, 46.7% had a very severe disability. The number of children with partially met needs increased significantly as the degree of severity increased. The number of children who had completely met needs did not seem to depend on the degree of severity and were quite evenly split among mild, moderate, severe or very severe degrees of disability. The same can be said for children who have completely unmet needs except for those with a mild disability where there are only 13.2% of them (see table 19).

Table 19
Use of and need for assistive aids and services for children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, by degree of severity, Canada, 2006

Need	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Very severe		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total who need	**16,710**	**18.5**	**19,540**	**21.6**	**26,640**	**29.5**	**27,590**	**30.5**	**90,480**	**100.0**
No needs met	2,930	17.5 [E]	6,670	34.1 [E]	6,080	22.8	6,560	23.8	22,240	24.6
Some needs met	1,850	11.1 [E]	4,150	21.2	8,510	31.9	12,720	46.1	27,230	30.1
All needs met	11,930	71.4	8,720	44.6	12,060	45.3	8,300	30.1	41,020	45.3

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

In terms of gender differences, girls had a significantly higher rate of met needs regarding the use of assistive technology. More specifically, 48.7% of girls were already using all the aids that they needed compared to 43.4% of boys who reported the same. Consequently, boys experienced higher levels of unmet need than girls (27.0% and 20.4%, respectively; see table 20).

Table 20
Use and need for assistive technology for children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, by gender, Canada 2006

Need	Boys		Girls		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Total who need	**57,330**	**100.0**	**33,160**	**100.0**	**90,480**	**100.0**
No needs met	15,480	27.0	6,760	20.4	22,240	24.6
Some need met	16,980	29.6	10,250	30.9	27,230	30.1
All needs met	24,880	43.4	16,140	48.7	41,020	45.3

Note: The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Majority of children with seeing or learning limitations use more than three different aids

Most children were using less than three different aids for assistance with their limitation. This is apparent for all disability aid types with the exception of seeing and learning where significantly more children were using 3 or more different assistive aids or services (70.0% and 66.7% respectively for each disability aid type). This general pattern was also observed for children who reported that they need aids. The majority indicated that they needed one or two different aids for assistance with their limitation regardless of whether they were using some aids already or did not have any (see table 21).

Table 21
Number of aids used and needed by children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, Canada, 2006

Aid type	Use		Need	
	1 to 2 aids	3 or more aids	1 to 2 aids	3 or more aids
	percentage			
Hearing	76.8	23.2 [E]	84.4	F
Seeing	30.0 [E]	70.0	85.2 [E]	F
Speech	84.7	15.3 [E]	97.6	F
Mobility	40.0	60.1	83.1	F
Agility	89.0	F	92.0	F
Learning	33.3	66.7	81.5	18.5 [E]
Other	97.3	F	100.0	F

Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Home computers were the most commonly used assistive devices for children with learning limitations

The type of assistive devices used by children with disabilities varied by the type of disability but for each type of limitation children tended to use the same assistive devices. table 22 shows that more than seven out of ten (72.4%) children with seeing limitations use large print reading materials and a similar proportion of children with hearing limitations used implants as hearing aids (69.8%). For other limitation types, the numbers fluctuate, for example, 57.4% of children with mobility limitations used a manual wheelchair and 65.1% of children with communication limitations used a picture board.

Table 22
Most commonly used assistive device by type of disability for children aged 5 to 14, Canada, 2006

Aid type	Most commonly used aids	%
Hearing	Hearing aids (implant)	69.8
Seeing	Large print materials	72.4
Speech	Picture board	65.1
Mobility	Manual wheel chair	57.4
Agility	Pencil grip	59.0
Learning	Home computer	88.3
Other	Respiratory aids[1]	36.1

1. Respiratory aids include aids such as inhalers, puffers and oxygen.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Parents and family contribute most for children's aids

Similar to adult respondents, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2006 results show that the burden of paying for a child's aids mostly fell on the child's parents and / or family members. Across Canada, parents or family members were the main contributors for children's aids (60.7%). Examining these rates by province reveals that there was no significant difference between provinces and the national rate in terms of familial contributions towards aids.

Public funds - another significant contributor towards children's aids

Another common payment source for children's aids came from public funds such as the health care system and other government programs. For all of Canada, 21.4% of assistive devices were paid for through public funds. There was no significant difference between provinces and the national rate in terms of public contributions towards children's aids except for Nova Scotia, who had a significantly lower rate (8.0%).

Nearly one tenth of aids used by Canadian children involved a payment plan

Nearly one in ten (7.6%) aids used by Canadian children aged 5 to 14 were rented or purchased with a payment plan. No differences existed between the provinces and combined territories.

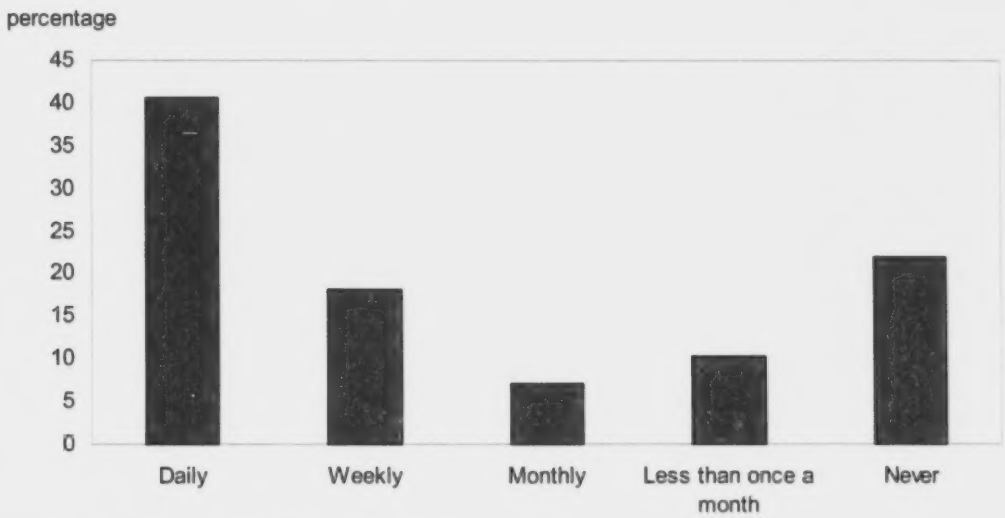
Costs preventing children from getting the aids that they need

The most commonly cited reason for children not having the aids they needed was cost. More specifically, 56.6% of respondents, across Canada, stated cost as the main reason for unmet needs. Cost was a more common barrier in Prince Edward Island (77.3%) compared to the national average. However, the rates did not differ significantly for the other provinces and territories.

Four out of ten children with disabilities experience daily difficulties participating in everyday activities

Difficulty participating in everyday activities occurred on a daily basis for four out of ten (40.5%) children with disabilities in Canada in 2006. Moreover, 18.0% of children experienced difficulties weekly and 7.1% experienced difficulties monthly as a result of their disability. About one in five children did not experience any problems participating in everyday activities (21.9%; see chart 5).

Chart 5
Proportion of children aged 5 to 14 who experience difficulty participating in everyday activities, by frequency, Canada, 2006



Note: Includes Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Half of children with mobility limitations experience difficulty with everyday activities on a daily basis

Experiencing difficulty on a daily basis fluctuated from nearly one half of children with mobility (46.6%) and agility (47.2%) limitations to a low of less than one third with seeing (29.7%) or hearing (29.2%) limitations. At the other end of the spectrum we find that approximately one in three persons with seeing limitations (37.4%) never experience limitations compared to the much lower rate of one in ten (10.1%) for persons with mobility limitations (see table 23). Knowing that children experienced difficulty with their everyday activities is only one side of the story, studying the effect of these difficulties is also important.

Table 23
Frequency of experiencing difficulty participating in everyday activities by children aged 5 to 14 with disabilities, by disability type

Limitation	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never
	percentage				
Hearing	29.2	14.0 [E]	12.2 [E]	8.7 [E]	32.1
Seeing	29.7	11.9 [E]	3.6 [E]	10.7 [E]	37.4
Communication	39.0	18.7	6.8	11.0	22.7
Mobility	46.6	17.6 [E]	11.3 [E]	10.5 [E]	10.1 [E]
Agility	47.2	12.1	8.8 [E]	11.6	18.6
Learning	41.6	20.9	5.6	9.7	20.8

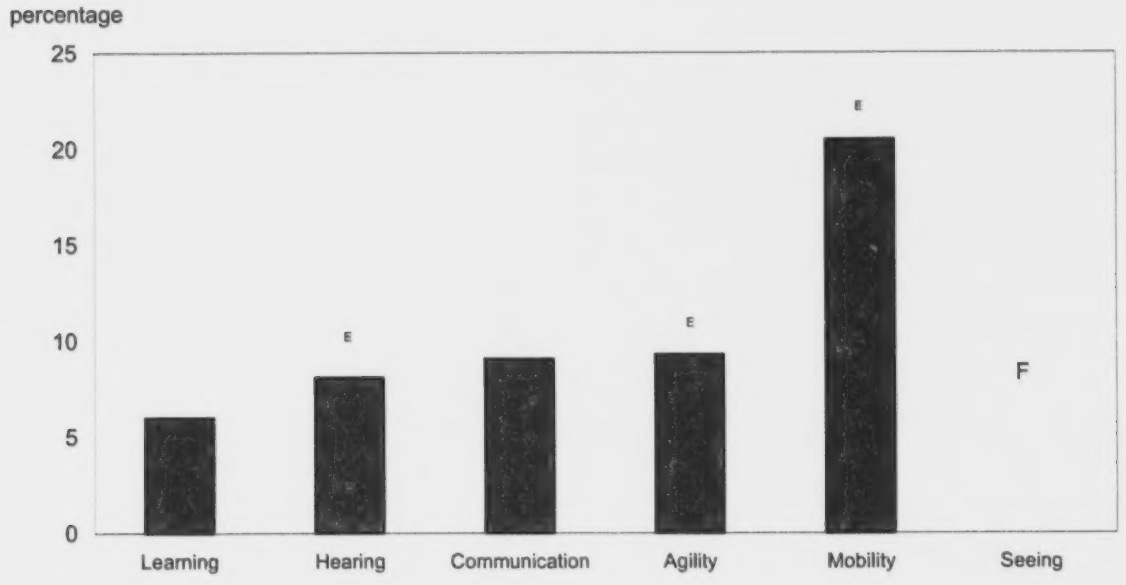
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

The effects of experiencing difficulty with everyday activities could range from mild participation difficulties to a complete inability to participate. Over half of the children who reported having difficulties experienced some difficulty (60.1%), approximately one quarter reported a lot of difficulty participating (28.2%) and about one tenth (9.7%) indicated that they were completely unable to participate in everyday activities.

One in five children with mobility limitations were completely prevented from participating in everyday activities

The 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) found that approximately one in five children with mobility limitations (20.5%) experienced such high levels of difficulty with their everyday activities that they were completely prevented from participating (see chart 6). The proportions of children with other disability types who were unable to participate were all significantly lower at less than 10%.

Chart 6
Inability to participate for children aged 5 to 14 in everyday activities, by limitation type, 2006



Note: Includes Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

About one in ten children with hearing limitations use sign language

There were 20,020 children between ages of 5 and 14 with a hearing limitation in Canada in 2006. About one in ten of these children (13.1% or 2,620 children) reported using sign language to communicate. Overall, children using sign language represented 1.3% of all Canadian children with disabilities. More than half of all children who used sign language (54.0%) lived in Ontario or Quebec and slightly less than one quarter (22.8%) lived in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta (see table 24). Of all child sign language users, 78.5% reported using American Sign Language (ASL).

Table 24
Children aged 5 to 14 with a hearing limitation who use sign language by geographical regions, Canada, 2006

Region	number	% of total population	% of region's population with disabilities
Canada	**2,620** [E]	**100.0**	**1.3** [E]
Atlantic[1]	140 [E]	5.2 [E]	0.9 [E]
Quebec and Ontario	1,410 [E]	54.0	1.2 [E]
Prairies[2]	600 [E]	22.8 [E]	1.5 [E]
British Columbia and Territories	F	F	F

1. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
2. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*

Two fifths of children using sign language used a sign language interpreter at least once per week or more

There was a similar proportion of children who use sign language who reported never using a sign language interpreter (41.4%) and those who said they use this service at least once a week or more (42.0%).

More than half of children with a hearing limitation are hard of hearing or experience some hearing loss

The categories of hearing loss in children, like in adults, included being deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or experiencing some hearing loss. Nationwide, the largest proportion of children with a hearing limitation indicated they were hard of hearing or experienced some hearing loss (78.2%), 8.7% reported being deaf or deafened 9.8% felt they did not belong to any of the above categories (see table 25).

Table 25
Degree of hearing limitation in children aged 5 to 14, by geographical region, Canada, 2006

Region	Deaf or deafened	Hard of hearing or some hearing loss	Other	Not applicable [1]	Total
	number				
Canada	**1,740** [E]	**15,650**	**1,970** [E]	F	**20,020**
Atlantic[2]	130 [E]	1,200	150 [E]	0	1,490
Quebec and Ontario	F	8,780	1,470 [E]	F	11,690
Prairies[3]	260 [E]	3,790	F	F	4,370
British Columbia and Territories	F	1,960 [E]	F	F	2,480

1. Category not applicable includes those who do not know or refuse to answer.
2. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
3. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Note: Territories include Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.*